

REMARKS

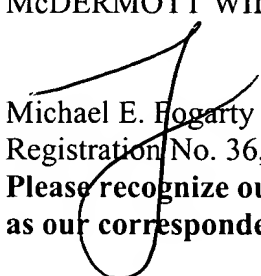
The Applicants like to extend thanks to the Examiner for agreeing that there is no need to submit a certified translation of the PCT application to perfect the priority date of September 8, 2000 of the above-identified application.

In the Office Action dated November 15, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Eifrig and claims 4 and 7-9 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eifrig. Since the cited reference Eifrig has an effective filing date of October 25, 2000, which is later than the effective filing date of the instant application, Eifrig does not constitute as a prior art reference. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully request that rejections based on both 102 and 103 be withdrawn and claims 1, 3, 4, and 7-9 are patentable. The Examiner's reconsideration for allowance is hereby earnestly solicited.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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